

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5594

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

COMUSGECTHAI BANGKOK

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12620

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH, M

SUBJECT: THAI-MALAYSIA BORDER PROBLEMS

REF: BANGKOK 11502 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAIRATTAKUN MET WITH MALAYSIAN AMBASSADOR MAY 3 TO DISCUSS ALLEGED INCURSION OF MALAYSIAN FORCES IN BETONG AREA OF SOUTHER THAILAND. OVER ONE THOUSAND PERSONS STATED ANTIJPGOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA DEMONSTRATION IN BETONG ON MAY 2 WHICH CONTINUES. END OF SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAIRATTAKUN CALLED IN THE MALAYSIAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND ON MAY 3 TO DISCUSS THE ALLEGED INCURSION OF MALAYSIAN FORCES INTO YALA PROVINCE. AFTER THE MEETING PHICHAIRATTAKUN TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE MALAYSIAN FORCE ATTACHED TO THE THAI-MALAYSIAN OPERATION HEAD-QUARTERS IN BETONG WOULD BE ASKED TO MOVE TO THE MALAYSIAN BORDER TOWN OF KROH, WHILE THE THAI BORDER FORCE IN
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MALAYSIA WOULD RETURN TO BETONG.

THIS WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH THE RTG'S DECLARED POLICY OF ALLOWING NO FOREIGN TROOPS TO REMAIN ON THAI SOIL.

2. THE BANGKOK POST REPORTED MAY 4 THAT DURING THE MEETING BETWEEN PHICHAIRAT AND THE MALAYSIAN AMBASSADOR THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER REQUESTED THE AMBASSADOR TO ASK HIS GOVERNMENT FOR VERIFICATION OF THE REPORTS OF THE INCURSION, AND TO PULL OUT ANY REMAINING MALAYSIAN TROOPS STILL ON THAI SOIL AS A RESULT OF THE OPERATION. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO ADVISED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE LIABLE FOR COMPENSATION FOR ANY DAMAGE SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF ANY SUCH OPERATIONS.

3. THE DECISION TO REQUEST WITHDRAWAL OF MALAYSIAN TROOPS AND TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF THE THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER COMMITTEE (TMBC) WAS MADE AT A MEETING HELD AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OF THE THAI MEMBERS OF THE TMBC, ATTENDED BY SUPREME COMMAND CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. CHAROEN PHONGPHANIT DEPUTY INTERIOR UNDER-SECRETARY DAMRONG SUNTHONSARATHUN AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTRIES. THE INTERIOR MINISTRY ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS SENDING TWO HIGH LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES TO INVESTIGATE THE ALLEGED INTRUSIONS BY MALAYSIAN TROOPS.

4. THE RTG TOOK THESE ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA (GOM) DEMONSTRATION IN BETONG, THE SOUTHERNMOST DISTRICT OF YALA PROVINCE. AMCONSUL SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT OVER 1000 PERSONS DEMONSTRATED THERE ON MAY 2 DEMANDING THAT THE RTG EJECT ALL MALAYSIAN POLICE AND MILITARY FORCES FROM THAILAND. THEY ALSO DEMANDED THE END OF HOT PURSUIT BY GOM FORCES INTO THAILAND, AND CALLED FOR THE RELEASE OF ALL THAI NATIONALS ARRESTED BY GOM FORCES. THE DEMONSTRATION CONTINUES.

5. AMCONSUL ADDED THAT THE DEMONSTRATION WAS CONSEQUENCE OF THE ON-GOING GOM OPERATION IN BORDER AREA (SEE REFTEL). HE SAID THAT IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYSIA (CPM) IS BEHIND THE BETONG DEMONSTRATION. CPM HAS TRADITIONALLY CONTROLLED MOST OF THIS HEAVILY CHINESE BORDER TOWN, AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT 1000 PERSONS COULD DEMONSTRATE ABOUT ANYTHING

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WITHOUT CPM APPROVAL. AS LOCAL RTG OFFICIALS ARE ALSO UNHAPPY WITH GOM LIAISON DURING THIS PAST OPERATION (REFTEL), OUR CONSUL EXPECTS THE DEMONSTRATION TO CONTINUE FOR A WHILE. CONSUL ALSO SPECULATES THAT DEMONSTRATION COULD MEAN THAT CURRENT GOM OPERATIONS HAVE HURT GUERRILLAS.

6. COMMENTS. THE ACTION OF THE RTG DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR CONSTRUCTIVE THAI-MALAYSIAN COOPERATION ON THE BORDER

PROBLEM. AT THE BANGKOK LEVEL THE RTG IS TAKING THE
NATIONALISTIC TACK THAT ITS SOVEREIGNTY IS BEING VIOLATED,
SINCE IT IS LOATHE TO ADMIT THAT IT HAS LITTLE CONTROL
OVER THE SITUATION IN THE BORDER PROVINCES. ON THE LOCAL
LEVEL AMCONSUL SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT MISUNDERSTANDINGS
AND SUSPICIONS ON BOTH SIDES (REFTEL) ARE LIKELY TO KEEP
TWO GOVERNMENTS FROM RESOLVING THEIR DIFFERENCES.
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